

# On the Back of a Grasshopper: The XXIV Corps and the Korean Occupation

A Monograph

by

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## **Abstract**

On the Back of a Grasshopper: The XXIV Corps and the Korean Occupation by MAJ Ryan R. Kroells, 60 pages.

This monograph explores the effectiveness of the American occupation of Korea in 1945. In 1945, the United States assigned the XXIV Corps to the occupation of Korea instead of the Tenth Field Army. The tactical nature of the corps' doctrine, structure and leadership were incompatible with the operational nature of the occupation. The XXIV Corps was effectively an independent corps responsible for negotiations with the Soviet occupied north and establishing Korea as an independent nation. By January of 1946, only five months after the three divisions of the corps arrived, the United States and Soviet Union reached an impasse signaled by the failure of the Soviet-American Joint Commission.

Over seven decades later, the impacts of the occupation of Korea continue to echo in international affairs. The modern operational artist can benefit from appreciating the immense complexity facing a formation that was neither trained nor equipped to handle it. Additionally, it is important to understand that peripheral actions have a significant and cumulative effect. In Korea, those effects were apparent in the first four months and emerged fully over four years later with the onset of the Korean War.

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Finally, I would like to thank the future leaders and scholars that seek a deeper understanding of the underlying causes of conflict. Though the understanding of the occupation still requires more research, I hope some clarity can be found within these pages on the need to create a truly unified approach— in purpose and understanding—for our actions. The continuous need to synchronize the political and military efforts toward a common purpose are even more dramatic now than they were in 1945. We owe it future generations to use force as a last result and to do what is in our power in an attempt to avert and remedy issues before conflict arises.

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## **Introduction**

Late in the summer of 1948, Lieutenant General John R. Hodge reflected back on his last three years of leading the American occupation of Korea in bemused bewilderment. Following Japan's collapse three years prior, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers Pacific, General Douglas MacArthur, thrust Hodge and the XXIV Corps into Korea as part of Operation Blacklist with little notice and virtually no resident expertise. Three grueling years of managing the complex interactions between American policy, an emerging Soviet rival and a bifurcated, chaotic Korean populace finally prepared him for that mission assigned to him three years earlier. Unfortunately, that hard earned knowledge and experience could do little to rectify the unfortunate environment that now existed in Korea. The Soviet Union and American powers transferred their growing international rivalry upon the restless Korean people and their inchoate leadership while the circumstances on the ground furthered the rivalry itself. As he passed the guidon to the United Nations contingent commander that summer to signal the change of responsibility between the two commands, he recognized that his inability to manage those complex interactions back in the fall of 1945 significantly contributed to Korea's now seemingly intractable path to civil war. Hodge knew that history would judge him harshly despite his best efforts and intentions. As he looked back at the tools and policy available, he remained bewildered on how he may have set a different course.

In the last months of World War II, the victorious powers deployed military and political resources to rebuild from the destruction of the war around the world. At the multiple conferences prior to the end of hostilities that decided the peace, each nation jockeyed for post war advantage in allocating those resources. In Europe and Japan, the focal areas for United States, multiple field armies occupied the defeated lands and secured the peace. In Europe, prominent generals such as General Mark Clark and Lucius Clay led the occupation of Italy and Austria. Just like MacArthur's command of Japan and the greater Pacific, President Harry S. Truman handpicked

them each for occupation duties based on their prestige and demonstrated competence as soldier statesmen. They benefitted from substantial diplomatic and academic experience prior to their roles leading military governments. These experiences significantly enhanced their ability to integrate effectively their military expertise with the demands of occupation.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the War Department identified a field army was also necessary on the less prominent Korean peninsula. Unlike the other occupations though, personal rivalries and political concerns overrode military and political necessity. As such, a smaller, less capable and inexperienced force occupied Korea reflecting the tertiary importance of the Korean peninsula. MacArthur assigned Hodge and his XXIV Corps as this smaller force to occupy the southern portion of the Korean peninsula as part of the greater plan for the occupation of the Pacific areas under Blacklist.

The fateful decision to send the XXVI Corps fell out of the harried efforts of the Allies as they approached the invasion of Japan. MacArthur faced a dilemma of significant consequence that directly affected whether a continued combat effort would be the main effort for his command or if Allied Forces would move to an occupation phase. MacArthur's robust staff balanced the two competing plans, Operation Downfall and Operation Blacklist, which competed for the same resources despite significantly different missions. Downfall required a two-phased assault into the heart of the Japanese mainland in order to force the capitulation of the Japanese government.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, Blacklist detailed the plan for the surrender or collapse of Japan in the possibility that the invasion proved unnecessary. MacArthur's command determined that either operation required the capabilities inherent in an operational level command namely, the Tenth

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<sup>1</sup> James I. Matray, *Hodge Podge: American Occupation Policy in Korea, 1945-1948*, Korean Studies, Vol. 19. (University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), accessed August 11, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23719137>, 18.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas MacArthur and General Staff, *Center for Military History Publication 13-3, Reports of General MacArthur: The Campaigns of MacArthur in the Pacific*, Vol. 1., accessed October 14, 2015, <http://www.history.army.mil/books/wwii/macarthur%20reports/macarthur%20v1/ch13.htm>, 397-399.



Army. The Tenth Army, commanded by General Joseph Stilwell, would serve as the overall operational headquarters while under them, the XXIV Corps would provide the majority of forces and the tactical headquarters. Due to a personality conflict at the highest levels, MacArthur removed Stilwell and the Tenth Army and deployed the XXIV as an independent corps. “Tactical actions, battles, engagements, and other tactical tasks to achieve military objectives” transpire at the tactical level of war.<sup>3</sup> Discrete, well-defined missions with clear end states and predetermined resource allocations usually characterize tactical actions. The next higher level of war in modern United States Army doctrine is the operational level of war. The operational level of war “links the tactical employment of forces to national and military strategic objectives through the design of campaigns and major operations. It determines how, when, where, and for what purpose commanders employ major forces to achieve assigned ends.”<sup>4</sup> Finally, national policy and national military strategy inform the strategic level of war.

Upon the sudden Japanese collapse, MacArthur and the Blacklist planners tasked the XXIV Corps and the other units of the Pacific occupation with two missions. Ideally, the XXIV Corps executed the first task, the tactical occupation of the Korean peninsula, then upon establishing security, followed with the second task, the establishment of a post-war government.<sup>5</sup> Hodge later stated the Joint Chiefs of Staff further clarified his mission as consisting of three parts. Closely aligned with the first Blacklist task, Hodge states his initial mission was to “take the Japanese surrender, disarm the Japanese armed forces, enforce the terms of the surrender, and

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<sup>3</sup> Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 1-01, *Doctrine Primer* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), 4-10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> United States Army Forces, Pacific, “Basic Outline Plan for “Blacklist” Operations to Occupy Japan Proper and Korea After Surrender or Collapse”, Edition 3 August 8, 1945.

remove Japanese imperialism from Korea.”<sup>6</sup> The second Blacklist task, establishing a post war government, aligns with the other two refined tasks. Hodge was to “maintain order, establish an effective government along democratic lines to replace the Japanese government in Korea, and rebuild a sound economy as a basis for Korean independence.”<sup>7</sup> Lastly, he was to “train Koreans in handling their own affairs and prepare Korea to govern itself as a free and independent nation.”<sup>8</sup>

In August of 1945, Hodge found himself still at Okinawa, 600 miles away, deprived of his higher operational headquarters and pondering the potential complexity awaiting his forces in Korea. The rapidly unfolding situation with Japan and the invading Soviets compelled MacArthur to deploy the corps as quickly as feasible. MacArthur’s command published the Blacklist order barely a month prior to the time the XXIV Corps deployed to the shores of southern Korea. Within the distributed version of the order, planners indiscriminately reassigned Hodge’s XXIV Corps to each mission and task previously assigned to the Tenth Army without consideration of the variations in capabilities. This is a powerful indicator of the hasty planning effort in light of the sudden Japanese collapse and Truman’s political restraints on Stilwell.<sup>9</sup> The rapid and violent march of the Soviet’s 25th Army from Manchuria to the north portions of Korea created even more haste to get a force deployed to limit the Soviet advance. Witnesses describe the Soviets using vehicles to run over Koreans for entertainment as well as wide spread looting and violence,

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<sup>6</sup> John R. Hodge, “Introduction to Headquarters, XXIV Corps, Troop Information and Education Section,” in *Korea*, (Troop and Information Section, General Headquarters, Far East Command: 1948).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> United States Army Forces, Pacific, “Basic Outline Plan for “Blacklist.”

striking fear in the Koreans as well as the Japanese occupiers.<sup>10</sup> Hodge quickly reoriented his forces from their much-needed respite at Okinawa and began planning a three-division assault through the Port of Inchon. Hodge was likely still unclear how the relationship of Chiang Kai Shek, the Chinese nationalist leader, and the American president resulted in consequences rippling to the tactical level but regardless his orders were clear. He was now the occupation commander for Korea, reporting directly to MacArthur, with less than a month to get his first division in country.<sup>11</sup> The political and strategic decisions made prior resulted in the corps encountering a level of structural and interactive complexity that it was ill prepared to handle. Structural complexity describes the sheer number of parts in a system--the greater the number of parts, the more structurally complex the system.<sup>12</sup> Interactive complexity “is based upon the behavior of the parts and the resulting interactions between them. The greater the freedom of action of each individual part and the more linkages among the components, the greater is the system’s interactive complexity.”<sup>13</sup> The introduction of the Soviet Union’s forces into Korea and the consequent division of the Korean peninsula along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel along with MacArthur’s requirement to replace General Joseph Stillwell’s Tenth Army with the XXIV Corps for the occupation are two of the most prominent decisions increasing the complexity. The confluence of these decisions along with the Korean domestic situation creates the immense complexity against which this paper evaluates the actions of the XXIV Corps at the end of 1945 as they transition to the occupation of Korea.

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<sup>10</sup> Alan R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945-1950* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), Loc. 1365-1386. Kindle.

<sup>11</sup> United States Army Forces, Pacific, “Basic Outline Plan for “Blacklist” Operations.

<sup>12</sup> US Army TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5-500 *Commander’s Appreciation and Campaign Design*, version 1 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2008), 5.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 5.

By the time Hodge passed command to the United Nations in 1948, there was an air of inevitability in contemporary discussion that the global phenomenon of the Cold War was a natural outflow of the opposing ideologies of the two new rising global powers. In February of 1946, less than six months after the American occupation of Korea began, George Kennan released his infamous long telegram detailing the Soviet ambitions that cemented the Truman administration's firm stance in opposition to the Soviet Union. Kennan wrote that the Soviet Union, "unlike previous aspirants to hegemony, is animated by a new fanatic faith, antithetical to our own, and seeks to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world."<sup>14</sup> As a highly influential diplomat, Kennan's telegram was an awakening to the rest of the US Government of what Hodge already suspected. The Soviet Union was by all estimates an emerging rival. Hodge deduced that the Soviets were actively working against the United States efforts in order to impose communist rule in Korea. Even worse, they were doing this through a particularly ghastly disregard for basic humanity.<sup>15</sup> The emerging policy and pundits of the time discussed the evil ambitions of the Soviet Union and its intent on domination through its own version of expansive, militaristic communism. This discussion led by Kennan and others led to Truman's containment policy in 1947 and later to the implementation strategy contained National Security Council Report 68 in 1950.<sup>16</sup>

The primary factors contributing to the increasingly difficult situation in Korea were apparent by the failure of the Soviet American Joint commission in January of 1945. First, as World War II cooled and Allied victory seemed certain, each nation and aspiring power jockeyed

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<sup>14</sup> US National Security Council, "NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security," April 14, 1950, accessed October 25, 2015, [www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm](http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm).

<sup>15</sup> H. Merrell Benninghoff to Byrnes, September 15, 1945, Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1945, VI, 1049-1050.

<sup>16</sup> US National Security Council, "NSC 68."

for position in the post war order to gain power. In Korea, the United States policies, the corresponding Soviet policies and actions, and the fragmented independence movement within Korea highlighted these power struggles. This interaction frames the Korean theater and is the subject of the first section. Second, a key decision by Truman compelled MacArthur to assign the XXIV Corps in place of the field army originally assigned to the mission in Korea. The difference in capabilities between these two formations in terms of doctrine, leadership and their ability to manage the Korean occupation were critical, and detrimental, to the occupation efforts. Finally, the international and domestic complexities converge with the training, doctrine and structure of the occupation force through the commander's decisions. This last section examines Hodge's specific decisions and the unit's execution of the resultant decisions leading up to the failure of the Joint Commission. Well respected Korean War author Bruce Cumings makes clear, "the basic issues over which the war in 1950 was fought were apparent immediately after liberation, within a three-month period, and led to open fighting that eventually claimed more than one hundred thousand lives in peasant rebellion, labor strife, guerrilla warfare, and open fight along the thirty-eighth parallel – all this before the ostensible Korea War began." This all seeks to answer the question then, how effective was the American occupation force in managing the complex operational environment of post World War II Korea?

Eliot Cohen and John Gooch provide a method for mapping out military misfortune in five steps that also roughly follows the framework for this paper. The first step is to identify if there was a failure and, if so, what was it? This paper argues that the American occupation of Korea was ineffective due to American political and military leaders failing to anticipate the immense interactive complexity and thereby dedicating insufficient resources and guidance to assist the effort. The second step of mapping the misfortune is to identify the critical tasks that went incomplete or unfulfilled. The first section, "Hot War Turned Cold," provides the political and military guidance that guided Hodge's actions and defined these critical tasks. Cohen and

Gooch's third step guides the layered analysis needed to examine "the behavior of different levels of organizations and their relative contributions to military misfortune."<sup>17</sup> This layered analysis is in the next two sections. The second identifies how the XXIV Corps and the military see its units in their design through doctrinal and leadership differences between the operational and tactical levels of war. The last section analyzes how Hodge, as the commander, interacts and further exacerbates the challenging situation creating substantial resistance within the first few months of occupation. This all seeks to identify the final part of the analysis, the "pathway to military misfortune" in the American occupation.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Eliot Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1990), 46.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

## **Section One: Hot War Turned Cold: Politics, Strategy and Korea**

Unfortunately, the simplistic rendering of a surrender ceremony at Appomattox or, as the case was in 1945, aboard the USS Missouri belies the immense complexity remaining after the completion of major hostilities. The occupation and transition to a new post hostility norm are often as critical to winning the peace as any battle during the conflict. In recognition of the immense complexity following World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union along with other allies, engaged in a series of conferences and agreements to establish the post war world order years prior to the surrender of any of the Axis powers. Amidst the reshuffling of power during and following the war, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the scion world leaders following the deterioration of the previous colonial powers. With this new responsibility, understanding and then managing the new world order became the yoke of the budding superpowers. The United States relationship with the Soviet Union undulated between the Cairo Declaration in 1943 and the failure of the Soviet Joint Commission in January of 1945. This section examines this shifting relationship that set the conditions and resulting complexity. These are the changing United States policy, the military strategy and Korea's struggle to define itself after Japanese occupation. In the first portion, the policy of the United States, starting with the 1943 Cairo Declaration through the end of 1945 towards the Soviets changed the nature of the Korean theater and Hodge's ability to overcome the emerging challenges. Next, MacArthur and the War Department shifted portions of the military strategy to accommodate the shifting policy. Finally, the Koreans acted independently of the greater power alignment to secure their own independence. How the occupation would unfold in Korea was uncertain in the summer of 1945. It was clear though that the responsible commander would own a complex relationship with an emerging rival while trying to reunify a nation—a nation without a living memory of how to operate independently.

Before the military creates a strategy, or an operational commander executes a campaign, first they must arm themselves with the political guidance available to guide their mission. Several sources of guidance defined the United States interest in Korea in 1945. The first set of sources were the prior strategic agreements between the United States and the foreign powers interested in Korea at the various conferences such as Cairo, Yalta and Potsdam. The wartime conferences between 1941 and 1945 of the leaders of the Allied forces provided the basic construct for Korea and the remainder of Japan's wartime possessions.<sup>19</sup> Beginning at the Cairo conference in November of 1943 the four powers of the United States, Britain, China and the Union of Soviet Social Republics made plans for the post war division of Japanese controlled territories.<sup>20</sup> Roosevelt introduced the trusteeship concept at the Cairo Conference as an attempt to contain growing Soviet power while ameliorating tensions.<sup>21</sup> The idea was a legacy of Metternich's diplomacy from the nineteenth century reinvented as the four policemen of Britain, China, the United States and the Soviet Union to guide the new world order.<sup>22</sup> The victorious Allied powers still regarded guided independence, or a period of tutelage on how to be a democracy, as the responsible action of great powers.<sup>23</sup> As the primary advocate of trusteeship,

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<sup>19</sup> US Department of State, Office of the Historian, "War Time Conferences, 1941-1945," accessed November 14, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/war-time-conferences>.

<sup>20</sup> US Department of State. 1943 Cairo Declaration, US Department of State Archives, accessed November 11, 2015, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/wwii/107184.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> Arnold A. Offner, *Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 202), 349.

<sup>22</sup> Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), 156.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Schroeder, *Metternich's Diplomacy at its Zenith, 1820-1823* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1969), 126.



Roosevelt touted it as the best model for Korea specifically and generally as a method to ensure the Soviets did not singlehandedly dominate any particular area after the eventual peace.

The Yalta conference in the spring of 1945, five months prior to the Potsdam agreement, offered no further clarification of the future situation in Korea but it did create one additional source of frustration for Hodge and the American occupation. The Yalta conference cemented the agreement by President Roosevelt to allow the Soviets to occupy the northern portion of Korea in exchange for Soviet assistance and a formal declaration of war against Japan. The Soviets happily accepted as it provided them an inroad to highly prized control of areas of Manchuria and Korea that would enable them to increase their access to trade routes.<sup>24</sup> Roosevelt understood the difficulties this created and drafted a cable to Stalin only week after the conference but did not send it. It highlighted the precariousness of the unfolding events versus the agreements. Roosevelt wrote that since Yalta, “I am frankly disturbed about the reason for this state of affairs, and I must tell you that I do not wholly understand the apparently indifferent attitude of your Government in many respects.”<sup>25</sup> Victory was still months away but the tension was already growing.

At the national level, the political transition from Roosevelt to Truman marked a transition in strategy vis a vis the Soviets. In 1945, there remained an uncertainty within the administration of the Soviet Union’s ambitions that may seem naïve in retrospect. Despite active insurgencies supported by communists in China, the Philippines, French Indochina, and elsewhere President Roosevelt was cautiously optimistic about the future relationship with the Soviet Union.<sup>26</sup> Conversely, Truman entered office with a renewed hope for Soviet partnership in

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<sup>24</sup> Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945-1950*, Loc. 1458, Kindle.

<sup>25</sup> Jean – Baptiste Duroselle, *From Wilson to Roosevelt: Foreign Policy of the United States, 1913-1945* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1968), 419.

<sup>26</sup> John Shy and Thomas W. Collier, “Revolutionary War,” *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton Paperbacks: Princeton University Press, 1986), 844-847, Kindle.

the future world. He attended the Potsdam Conference in July of 1945 that resulted in the Potsdam Declaration expressing the clear terms for Japanese surrender and reaffirmed Cairo's sentiment that declared democracy, freedom of religion and thought, and respect for fundamental human rights were rights of all peoples.<sup>27</sup> The Potsdam and Cairo Declarations led to the idealistic objectives the XXIV Corps attempted to implement on the Korean peninsula illustrated in the second portion of the Blacklist mission and the same the Allies were executing in the other occupation zones. The Allied Powers would cease their occupation only once the controlled territories met these objectives of democracy and tolerance.<sup>28</sup>

Truman foreshadowed a lack of political prowess when he turned to Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin at the Potsdam Conference and informed the Soviet Premier that he did not consider himself a politician; rather he was a proud "yes or no" man.<sup>29</sup> This outlook reflected the bold attitude expected of a tactical combat commander entrusted with securing clear victories over vicious opponents, not a statesman with the nuanced prowess of operating in the gray trade space of strategic affairs. This statement oversimplifies Truman's worldview but still provides a window into the decision making of the democrat from Missouri. Truman fixated on domestic issues that made the demanding and complex international issues still facing the United States and the world in 1945 often second-rate concerns. Within hours after departing the Potsdam conference that decided many aspects of the fate of the post-world order, Truman changed focus away from the complexity of the post World War II environment. By September 6, only days

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<sup>27</sup> US Department of State, "Potsdam Declaration, Proclamation Defining Terms for Japanese Surrender," Issued July 26, 1945, accessed November 12, 1945, <http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c06.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Offner, *Another Such Victory*, 72.

after the Japanese surrender, Truman initiated one of the broadest, sweeping domestic programs of any American president.<sup>30</sup>

The United States, war weary from the heavy casualties and foreign involvement of the previous four years, followed Truman's lead and focused inward. Within sixteen months, the United States reduced the size of the military from twelve million to 1.5 million.<sup>31</sup> For the mission in Korea, this reduction and inward focus assured that resources would remain constrained. Furthermore unsure of the purpose of Korea and deterred by the inhospitable conditions, soldiers viewed Korea as an inconsequential backwater and the "end of the line" for duty stations.<sup>32</sup> In turn, "nine out of ten officers tried to get their orders changed" causing an "acute shortage of experienced sergeants and company grade officers."<sup>33</sup> Any operation that Hodge executed in Korea must account for the increasingly poor quality of troops at his command.

Intersecting the political and military realms, Truman dictated a specific restriction to remove the most capable commander at MacArthur's command for the Korean occupation. It is often difficult for military planners when strategic decision makers explicitly dictate not just the 'why' of military operations but also the 'how' to execute the operation. In a late decision, President Truman withdrew his support for the Tenth Field Army commander, General Joseph Stilwell, because of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek's strong dislike of Stilwell after he served as

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<sup>30</sup> David McCullough, *Truman* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1992) Loc. 9024-9025, Kindle.

<sup>31</sup> McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State*, 160.

<sup>32</sup> Ronald Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire: The Japanese Surrender and the Battle for Postwar Asia* (New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group, 2007) Loc. 2956, Kindle.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

Kai-Shek's chief of staff in China.<sup>34</sup> This was another unfortunate fallout of what Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall considered the "most difficult and distasteful China tangle."<sup>35</sup> Stilwell received the blunt message "that the Tenth Army was out of the Blacklist operation" without further clarification.<sup>36</sup> Stilwell's experience in Asia at the operational and strategic level was the equal of any other military commander and far exceeded that of Hodge. Stilwell served in East Asia for years interacting directly at the political level that gave him the confidence to operate in the gray space where the military and political realms intersect. Despite his "Vinegar Joe" moniker, he possessed a predisposition much more suited to dealing with the communist and leaders involved in Korea's occupation.<sup>37</sup> Stilwell later commanded the 6th Army signaling the continued respect he commanded and, thus, why MacArthur could not outright relieve him as the Tenth Army commander.<sup>38</sup> Only weeks prior to the invasion, the Blacklist planners scribbled over any mention of Tenth Army in the Blacklist Order and jotted the XXIV Corps as a one for one replacement. In terms of capability, they were far from equals.

With broad strategic guidance and expecting few resources, Hodge looked next to his higher military headquarters for guidance. The Operation Blacklist order, discussed previously, and MacArthur's proclamations serve as the key documents available to Hodge to inform transition his tactical corps to this new operational mission. Unfortunately, the Blacklist order

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<sup>34</sup> Michael C. Sandusky, *America's Parallel* (Alexandria, VA: Old Dominion Press, 1983), 259-265.

<sup>35</sup> Pogue Biographies, "George C. Marshall Biography", Vol. 2: Ordeal and Hope, accessed December 4, 2015, <http://marshallfoundation.org/library/digital-archive/ordeal-and-hope-chapter-16-tyranny-of-the-weak/#sthash.wz1KEvKR.dpuf>, 351.

<sup>36</sup> Sandusky, *America's Parallel*, 261.

<sup>37</sup> William Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 36, Kindle.

<sup>38</sup> Staff of President Harry S. Truman, "The President's Day, December 18, 1945," accessed January 29, 2016, <http://trumanlibrary.org/calendar/main.php>.

provided virtually no guidance on specifically how the XXIV Corps was to perform its mission upon the conclusion of the tactical mission set. This was likely because the Blacklist Order recipients were originally all operational level commands with robust staffs to interpret strategic guidance in line with broad military objectives for their specific theaters. Hodge had no such staff nor personal experience.

MacArthur's Proclamation Number One attempted to translate the guidance from the prior conferences for the use of the occupation forces throughout the Supreme Commander Allied Powers area of command. On September 7, 1945, MacArthur issued Proclamation Number One declaring that the United States now controlled all of Korea south of the thirty-eighth parallel. In typical MacArthur flair, he ensured that his declaration occurred the day before the Korean invasion to prevent losing any media attention to the XXIV Corps and Hodge. Included in this order was the now famous line that "in due course Korea shall become free and independent, the Korean people are assured that the purpose of the occupation is to enforce the instrument of surrender and to protect them in their personal and religious rights."<sup>39</sup> The Americans understood that it was critical to establish a military government capable of filling the large vacuums of authority left behind by the Japanese occupiers.

Finally, Two months prior to MacArthur's proclamation, Colonel Dean Rusk with his colleagues at the State War Navy Coordinating Committee drew a fateful 120-mile line across the Korean peninsula at the thirty-eighth parallel on a map pulled from National Geographic.<sup>40</sup> Rusk,

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<sup>39</sup> Report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs pursuant to House Resolution 206. Background Information on Korea. "A resolution authorizing the committee on foreign affairs to conduct thorough studies and investigations of all matters coming within the jurisdiction of such committee. 81<sup>st</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, House Report No. 2495, July 11, 1950 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office: 1950), 3.

<sup>40</sup> Dean Rusk, "Korea and the World in 1950," Truman Collection, accessed February 19, 2016, [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/korea/large/world.htm.bak](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/world.htm.bak).

the future secretary of state, did not know the grave implications his team's hasty planning eventually helped perpetuate. Rather, he was reacting in fashion all too common to military operations. He gave what he believed to be the best solution in a time-constrained environment to a poorly understood problem.<sup>41</sup> The haphazard line did not account for population centers, routes or economic considerations. However, planners viewed the border as administrative, not intended to divide the peninsula permanently, in order to divide responsibility of the peninsula between the Soviet north and the American south. The intent was to create a boundary line that was geographically acceptable to the Soviets but still gave the Americans the territories they desired. These areas were the capital in Seoul, the symbolically important ancient capital of Kaesong and two ports, ostensibly for logistics.<sup>42</sup>

While the emerging and declining powers sorted out how the new global order would unfold, emerging and established Korean leaders looked inward towards a new Korea potentially free of external rule. Creating immense tension for Hodge's attempt to implement an occupying government, local Korean politicians declared the independence of the Korean nation with Japanese concurrence prior to the official Japanese capitulation. General Abe, commander of Japanese forces in Korea, sought and found a Korean leader in early August to assume responsibility for the areas south of the Soviet occupied zone. Yo Unhyong, a leftist newspaper editor, accepted the request of the Japanese commander based on the condition that the Japanese would surrender authority and give a relatively free hand to him. Unhyong established the Korean People's Republic and declared the independence of the Korean nation weeks prior to the

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<sup>41</sup> James I. Matray, *Captive of the Cold War: The Decision to Divide Korea at the 38th Parallel*, "Pacific Historical Review 50 (May 1981), 145-168.

<sup>42</sup> Donald W. Boose, Jr. "Portentous Sideshow: The Korean Occupation Decision," *Parameters*, Winter (1995): 112-129, accessed November 1, 2015, <http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/1995/boose.htm>.

American arrival.<sup>43</sup> Abe originally selected the Korean leader in order to prevent the general disorder he feared when Japan's inevitable surrender transpired. In reality, this fateful decision further exacerbated the rising Korean nationalism and created an immediately strained relationship between Hodge's command and the local people.

From outside the country, well-known political refugees such as Syngman Rhee and Kim Koo provided direction and a communications between Korean nationalists and the rest of the world. Inspired by President Woodrow Wilson's advocacy for every nation's right to self-determination, riots broke out in 1919 forcing the Japanese to liberalize their rule in Korea to placate the masses. These riots and the subsequent fleeing of political activists marked the beginning of Korean nationalism.<sup>44</sup> From these nationalists, Kim Koo emerged after successfully masterminding an assassination of a Japanese General and nearly killing the Japanese Ambassador to China. This gained him sufficient notoriety and legitimacy as a political representative to the Korean nationalist elements. Koo led the provisional government from China, future South Korean president and Princeton doctorate recipient, Syngman Rhee, advanced the Korean Provisional Government's agenda from Washington DC.<sup>45</sup> Koo and Rhee, sometimes in concert, sometimes opposed, both figured prominently in Hodge's attempts to implement US policy in Korea.

The dependencies and reforms created during the Japanese occupation period loomed heavy on the minds of the Korean people. The Japanese officially annexed Korea in 1910 and for thirty-five years implemented a series of oppressive policies to cement their domination over the

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<sup>43</sup> Bonnie C. Oh, *Korea Under the American Military Government, 1945 – 1948* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 3.

<sup>44</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 32.

<sup>45</sup> Ronald Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire*, Loc. 2887, Kindle.

Korean peninsula. Despite the oppressive occupation, the Japanese did provide significant improvements to the Korean transportation system including building nearly 3,500 miles of roads, a growing economy, and reformed education systems during this period.<sup>46</sup> The Japanese contributions were self-serving in order to extract the resources efficiently from Korea for greater Japan's benefit. In 1939, exports from Korea were valued at just over 1 billion yen of which 97% arrived in Japan or Japanese occupied areas. Similarly, over 94% of Korea's imports came from Japanese occupied territories.<sup>47</sup>

Prior to Hodge's forces landing at Inchon, and while Truman made the fateful decision to restrict MacArthur's choices on a future commander, the immense complexity in Korea was beginning to combine with the United States near complete lack of preparation for the occupation. The Cairo, Potsdam and Yalta conferences proffered aspirational goals of democracy, freedom of religion and thought, and respect for human rights along with the obligation for the United States and the allies to provide a period of incubation for Korea to achieve these lofty goals. MacArthur's proclamation and Blacklist offered little in practical guidance but largely restated the goals of the policy makers. Further, the United States relationship with the Soviet Union strained internationally as the new world powers competed for influence in an uncertain and changing global environment. Finally, the Korean populace's chants for independence against the Japanese occupation became increasingly strong. With these factors all known prior to the arrival of American forces on Korean soil, only the tactical peg of Hodge and the XXIV Corps remained for MacArthur to fill the operational hole of the occupation mission.

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<sup>46</sup> Ronald Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire*, Loc 2561, Kindle.

<sup>47</sup> A.J. Grajdanzev, "Korea in the Postwar World," *Foreign Affairs*, April, 1944, accessed March 29, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-korea/1944-04-01/korea-postwar-world>.



## **Section Two: Tactical Peg, Operational Hole**

Understanding the capabilities of the different types of units allows the further understanding of the strategic implications of assigning a corps rather than a field army to the Korean occupation. Specifically, what were the characteristics of the tactical XXIV Corps that made it less effective than the Tenth Army? In 1945, tactical units were generally corps and below while operational units were usually field armies and higher. There was some variation on this depending on the mission and theater but this construct holds true for the example examined here. As mentioned, political restrictions and resource shortfalls precluded MacArthur from selecting his primary choice, Stilwell and the Tenth Army. As every other unit was already committed to higher priority missions, he made the difficult decision to use a potentially inadequate force that may be unable to manage the immense long-term complexity of the occupation. The removal of options did not alleviate the obligation to fulfill the mission. Further, Japan's sudden capitulation caused a rapidly abbreviated execution timeline that demanded a quick deployment of what was available at MacArthur's immediate command. This section demonstrates the competency of the corps in their intended tactical role during Blacklist and provides the layered analysis of how the army designed a corps versus a field army in terms of the commander, doctrine and training. This helps illuminate why the corps was poorly prepared and, as such, an ineffective force for the complex, operational mission described in the previous section.

Previous experience provided Hodge and the XXIV Corps the familiarity to overcome the structural complexity entailed in the first portion of the Blacklist mission, which equated to a strategic offensive. To reiterate, the first portion of Blacklist was to "take the Japanese surrender, disarm the Japanese armed forces, enforce the terms of the surrender, and remove Japanese

imperialism from Korea.”<sup>48</sup> Though large in scale, the strategic offensive required similar actions the XXIV Corps performed in Operation Iceberg in early 1945. Period doctrine describes the strategic offensive as “a nation seeking to impose its will on another by force of arms, invasion of territory, or occupation of vital areas.”<sup>49</sup> “For success, the commander... must not only bring superior forces to bear in the air and on the ground, but he must provide for the security of an ever-lengthening line of communication and all its installations; he must not only operate against the armed forces of the enemy but must protect his forces against a hostile population.”<sup>50</sup> Though Blacklist was larger in scale and Hodge lacked customary field army oversight, the essential nature of assaulting, seizing and securing the area did not greatly differ from Iceberg. Iceberg entailed the seizure of the Ryukyu Islands from October of 1944 to February of 1945 as part of the lead up to the invasion of Japan. During Iceberg, the corps alternated between supporting and supported relationships with the Third Amphibious Corps (Marine) all the while receiving direction from Stillwell’s Tenth Army command.<sup>51</sup> Hodge, then a Major General, successfully commanded two divisions and employed them in tactical roles such as seizing high ground in support of a landing or conducting a beach assault. Of note, the Tenth Army relieved the XXIV Corps of any military government responsibilities beyond that demanded immediately in the combat areas during Iceberg. The Tenth Army subsumed those responsibilities to allow the XXIV Corps to focus on combat operations. The two military government detachments assigned to XXIV Corps for the Iceberg operation only concerned themselves with the evacuation of

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<sup>48</sup> John R. Hodge, “Introduction to Headquarters,” in *Korea*.

<sup>49</sup> War Department, Field Manual 100-15, *Field Service Regulations: Larger Units* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942), 14.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Roy E. Appleman, James M. Burns, Russel A. Guegeler, and John Stevens, *Okinawa: The Last Battle*. United States Army In World War II: The War in the Pacific (Washington DC: US Army Center of Military History, 2000), 24-28.

prisoners, similar to military police operations, depriving the military government teams of experience they would soon desperately need.<sup>52</sup>

Similarly to Iceberg, the Blacklist order envisioned a period of limited combat against isolated pockets of military forces that would continue to resist despite the surrender. The intelligence available estimated that threat was over a quarter of a million lightly armed Japanese soldiers on the Korean mainland south of the thirty-eighth parallel. The order stated that these Japanese soldiers were to be treated as hostile regardless of the surrender of the Japanese Government until physically secured. Intelligence estimates predicted some Japanese elements would resist, “particularly by the suicidal elements of the armed forces who will take advantage of any weakness on the part of our forces.”<sup>53</sup> The XXIV Corps could expect some cooperation from the Korean population but this was even suspect as little was really known about the disposition of the Korean people. Under these assumptions, Hodge ordered the corps prepare a large-scale invasion of the Korean peninsula versus focusing on the later occupation.

Upon landing on Korea, the corps conducted similar operations like to “destroy hostile elements which oppose by military action” efforts to impose the Japanese surrender terms. In addition, they needed to gain control of military resources, disarm Japanese armed forces and other belligerents and gain control of the principle lines of coast and overland communication. The divisions successfully executed these tasks, assembling the Japanese soldiers and civilians at key ports and eventually repatriating nearly 250,000 Japanese soldiers and civilians as part of the operation.<sup>54</sup> These operations “permit(ted) control of the political, economic and military life” of Korea by XXIV Corps. In addition to being critical political areas, as understood by the planners

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<sup>52</sup> John R. Hodge, “Ryukyus: XXIV Corps After Action Report, April 1945 – June 1945,” (June 1945), 92-94

<sup>53</sup> United States Army Forces, Pacific, “Basic Outline Plan for “Blacklist.”

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

of the thirty-eighth parallel, they were also economically and socially critical as they included 39 percent of the population, 18 percent of the industrial capacity and 44 percent of the food production.<sup>55</sup>

The Hodge focused on how to best use its three infantry divisions' raw troop strength to achieve the first portion of the Blacklist mission because of the tactical necessity of their initial tasks. The corps 62,724 combat soldiers and 29,076 support soldiers to conduct the initial security mission. Of these, the 7th Infantry Division was immediately available to accompany Hodge on the initial landing on September 8, 1945 at the port of Inchon. The 6th Infantry Division followed in mid-September. Lastly, the 40th Division, composed of Utah and California national guardsmen, followed at the end of September and into October.<sup>56</sup> The national guardsmen were a temporary fill for the invasion and redeployed after the surrender of the Japanese forces in Korea as part of the overall army drawdown. Only Major General Archibald Arnold of the 7th Infantry Division worked with the XXIV Corps commander prior to the invasion.

In execution, Hodge synchronized the divisions maneuvers during the invasion and empowered his divisions to execute their missions boldly. Hodge ordered the 7th Division under to perform this initial assault then sweep northwards to capture Seoul and subsequent objectives. Planners selected these objectives to enable further air and ground capability to the established forces by capturing airfields and critical nodes.<sup>57</sup> He deployed the two additional infantry divisions in accordance with the order as they flowed in between mid-September and mid-October. With the 7th Infantry Division headed to Seoul, the 6th Division moved to Taegu and

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>56</sup> United States Army Forces Korea, *History of the United States Army Military Government in Korea: Period of September 1945-June 1946* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1946), 16.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 17-19.

the Fortieth to Pusan in order to secure the areas and assist with the removal of Japanese authorities.<sup>58</sup> The order alluded to mission command in specifically emphasizing maximum delegation to the subordinate commands to maximize initiative.<sup>59</sup> The subordinate divisions were able to secure the surrender of the Japanese soldiers quickly and repatriate them with efficiency and avoiding incidents like the Russian's vicious treatment of their captives.<sup>60</sup> Hodge's extensive experience at Bougainville, Leyte, and the Ryukyus prepared him well to plan, synchronize and execute these structurally complex operations.

Having established the XXIV Corps proficiency in their design role, the successes during the tactical aspects of the initial invasion are where the success story concludes due to three aspects of the fundamental composition of the corps. These are the commander, the doctrine and training, and the military's institutional preparation for an occupation. Individually, each was negatively impacting to prepare a corps for an operational theater and specifically for the Korean occupation. Combined they invited disappointment. First, training education and experience prepared Hodge for the mission demanded of him as a traditional corps commander. As the commander of a tactical unit, Hodge's reputation as a "soldier's soldier" and a rough around the edges warfighter paint a favorable image of a combat tested general in the South Pacific conducting the bloody and grueling work of island hopping.<sup>61</sup> He was a man that could relate to his troops and inspire them to continue the fight even amongst the fiercest fighting. Marshall was exacting on his standards towards potential corps commanders. They needed to be many-sided, possessing combat experience, a distinguished record and a favorable reputation with the elites of

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>60</sup> Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945-1950*, Loc. 1590, Kindle.

<sup>61</sup> United States Army Forces Korea, *History of the United States Army Military Government in Korea*, 12.

the army, namely, Marshall, Eisenhower, and MacArthur. They “must be fair and generous to those under them, yet ruthless if need be.”<sup>62</sup> As a tactical commander, Hodge excelled at the division and corps level in the complex, joint fights across the Pacific theater. This earned him promotion from Lt. Col. as the VII Corps chief of staff in 1941 to his position as the corps commander in just four years.

The experience, personality, and training of this type of ferocious leader though were not necessarily congruent to the nuanced demands of running an independent occupation. As primary executors of the Operation Blacklist order, MacArthur demanded a great deal of independence and diplomacy from his occupation commander in Korea. Hodge’s role remained as a corps commander but his responsibilities increased to encompass operational and even strategic demands of being the senior American commander in Korea. The requisite skills critical required of the occupation commanders in Europe and Asia such as Clay, Clark and MacArthur were largely a result of a lifetime of education and experience in positions that groomed those field commanders for those premier positions.<sup>63</sup> Korean War expert, James Matray, is highly critical of Hodge’s aptitude in terms of leadership and capabilities for this new role. He describes John Hodge as a small town, blue-collar native of Illinois that was openly racist and gave little credit to the Koreans due to his upbringing, academic background and practical experience.<sup>64</sup> Korean War writer Bruce Cumings draws similarities between Hodge and Truman’s personalities, describing both as practicing a “courageous but ill-considered decisiveness.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Pogue Biographies, “George C. Marshall Biography”, Vol. 3: Organizer of Victory, accessed December 4, 2015, <http://marshallfoundation.org/library/digital-archive/organizer-of-victory-chapter-6-facets-of-command/#sthash.1BTpLYt.dpuf>, 115.

<sup>63</sup> Matray, *Hodge Podge*.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>65</sup> Cumings, *Origins of the Cold War*, 440.

Regardless of upbringing, he was at a distinct disadvantage professionally to the other occupation commanders in terms of interacting with political entities. Certainly, other commanders in World War II achieved a great deal of success and notoriety despite humble beginnings in rural areas such as Generals Dwight Eisenhower, Omar Bradley and Mark W. Clark. Similar to those high profile commanders, Stilwell was well versed in the politics of the Asian theater having gained experience as the Chinese chief of staff and a field army commander prior.<sup>66</sup> Comparatively, Hodge had “little administrative experience and no prewar familiarity with Asia.”<sup>67</sup> The added celebrity and credibility each of these commanders enjoyed at home and abroad certainly assisted in their ability to negotiate at the highest levels of government. Combined with Stilwell’s more accommodating disposition for politics mentioned earlier, Hodge was clearly the compromise candidate for the high profile position of occupation commander.

Lacking career experience or a personal background, Hodge was without opportunity for learning the nuanced skills required of his assigned duty since the institutional army was averse to nation building duties. The Army’s education system did not prepare its leaders to be diplomatically astute or in charge of nation building operations. The Command and General Staff College at Leavenworth clearly delineated between the realm of politics and military strategy. “Politics and strategy are radically and fundamentally things apart. Strategy begins where politics ends. All that soldiers ask is that once the policy is settled, strategy and command shall be regarded as something in a sphere apart from politics ... The line of demarcation must be drawn between politics and strategy, supply and operations. Having found this line, all sides must abstain from trespassing.”<sup>68</sup> As a tactical commander that reported to a higher headquarters,

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<sup>66</sup> Maurice Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943-1944, United States Army in World War II*, Center of Military History (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2000).

<sup>67</sup> Matray, *Hodge Podge*, 18.

Hodge's concern with operational matters of diplomacy and domestic politics were previously non-existent. His experiences accustomed him to having a translating layer at the field army or theater level to turn operational and strategic concerns into tactical missions. He launched into this role without preparation, doctrine or a staff with even a marginal knowledge of Korean culture, politics or history.

The school at Leavenworth trained future commanders and staff officers in the art and science of war. The mid-career education received prepared officers for a very specific role, that is to expertly employ the resources available to large army units. Specifically, the school was ordered to prepare officer's in "the critical roles of combining arms of divisions and corps, of commanding these formations, and of serving as the general staffs of these formations."<sup>69</sup> Hodge and the XXIV Corps staff succeeded in the skills the Command and General Staff College taught them, employing tactical forces astutely against an enemy. Occupation, however, was a completely new experience to them.

Beyond the personalities of the respective commanders, the institutional army provided little help in doctrine or training to help Hodge bridge the gap between tactical command and operational responsibilities. Detailed doctrine can sometimes mitigate the shortcomings of units placed in unfamiliar situations. Army doctrine in 1945 focused on the war fighting and spent woefully little effort on the challenges of winning the post war peace. World War II era doctrine outlined the expectations of a corps. Structurally, "the corps is primarily a tactical unit of execution and maneuver" consisting of a headquarters and corps troops. The composition of the corps headquarters and the subordinate divisions assigned are variable depending on the

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<sup>68</sup> From John G. Nicolay and John M. Hay, Lincoln, quoted in Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 51.

<sup>69</sup> Peter J. Schifferle, *America's School for War: Fort Leavenworth, Officer Education and Victory in World War II* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 34-35.



mission.<sup>70</sup> The original conception of corps and divisions in the early years of World War II were ‘type’ corps and divisions standardized for uniformity as the army expanded. In September of 1942, General McNair proposed abandoning the standardized model for a corps in favor of an ad hoc force tailored to each individual mission in order to economize the availability of regular army officers. He based this concept on the German tactical organization at the time. Despite strong protestations from McNair’s own staff, he put the concept forward to the War Department for approval. McNair’s staff believed that dismantling the standardized model ruined cohesion, “that team training would suffer if units were so highly interchangeable,” and “that confusion would result from such radical departure.”<sup>71</sup> Despite the protestations, this new ad hoc structure went into effect in 1943. The army activated the XXIV Corps on 8 April 1944 with a table of organization totaling 280 officers and enlisted.

Conversely, the Tenth Army’s capability and expertise exceeded that organic to an army corps by design. The theory of the large units put forth by General McNair was that a field army “was both a combat and an administrative agency, the corps a combat agency only, unless operating independently, in which case it should be reinforced to function as a small army.”<sup>72</sup> This single line in the field manual alludes to a corps acting as an operational headquarters but it belies the fact that there was no defined road for a corps to transition to an operational headquarters. The field army was a force to plan and synchronize operations over time and vast distances. “In his planning the army commander must project himself well into the future; his plans must cover considerable periods of operations; and while one operations is progressing he

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<sup>70</sup> War Department, Field Manual 100-15, *Field Service Regulations*, 56.

<sup>71</sup> *Army Ground Forces Study No. 8: Reorganization of Ground Troops for Combat*, Center of Military History, 50.

<sup>72</sup> Kent Roberts Greenfield, Robert R. Palmer and Bell I. Wiley, *Center of Military History Publication 2-1, United States Army in World War II: The Army Ground Forces: The Organization for Ground Combat Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1987), 364-366.

must be planning the next.”<sup>73</sup>, Conversely, The corps planned and thought in terms of short-term operations. “The corps was conceived as consisting essentially of a commander and a handful of staff officers who gave unity of direction and continuity of purpose to a mass of units in combat.”<sup>74</sup> The corps was capable of tasking and attaching the enabler units that were not organic to the divisions but necessary for combat. Armies routinely attached and detached divisions to corps in order to facilitate the mission at hand.

Stillwell’s Tenth Field Army organized as a robust force capable of managing the operations of a theater and multiple corps, typical of a field army in 1945. It could function as a tactical command but its design enabled it command at the operational level of war. The operational level of war “between the grand strategy of nations and theaters and the tactical combat of corps and smaller units” is where Stilwell’s primary experience resided.<sup>75</sup> MacArthur’s staff provided “an accurate and sound estimate of the means necessary” to accomplish the mission in Korea to the War Department by originally assigning the Tenth Army to the occupation mission in Korea as part of Blacklist.<sup>76</sup> This was consistent with the occupation efforts elsewhere such as the use of two field armies to occupy Japan. The field army’s construct enabled them conduct long-range planning, manage routes of communication, estimate supply and evacuation needs and manage traffic and transportation control for a theater.<sup>77</sup> The field army’s systems were designed specifically for controlling the territorial, tactical and

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<sup>73</sup> Field Manual 100-15, *Field Service Regulations*, 52.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 365.

<sup>75</sup> David W. Hogan, Jr. *Center of Military History Publication 70-60: A Command Post at War: First Army Headquarters in Europe, 1943-1945* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2000), vii.

<sup>76</sup> Field Manual 100-15, *Field Service Regulations*, 3.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 56.

administrative responsibilities of a theater and a mass of troops.<sup>78</sup> Stilwell's Tenth Army was also experienced in these duties having just executed them as the field army assigned to the Ryukyus as part of Iceberg where the XXIV Corps and Hodge executed tactical missions at Stilwell's behest.

Even if doctrine existed to increase the size of the corps to replicate a field army, the XXIV Corps headquarters were not standardized units with well-organized training plans and such a dramatic shift would challenge the unit.<sup>79</sup> Corps assembled in an ad hoc manner "depending on its mission, the terrain, and the situation."<sup>80</sup> The army selected a commander and key staff officers that then assembled in theater to create a corps command that could direct the combat operations of the fighting divisions.<sup>81</sup> Hodge's XXIV corps staff cohesion was minimal based on the frequent transition of personnel through the system and his assignment as corps commander only a few months before the Blacklist operation. Operation Iceberg was his first operation as a corps commander.<sup>82</sup> The troops' expectation that they would go home after hostilities ceased in the Pacific further degraded the cohesion of the unit as troops and even divisions eagerly anticipated their departure to home. Any training that executed as a staff prior to the Blacklist invasion, Hodge likely directed towards the critical war fighting functions that kept soldiers alive and won the tactical fight in their previous engagements.

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<sup>78</sup> Field Manual 100-15, *Field Service Regulations*, 51.

<sup>79</sup> Greenfield, Palmer and Wiley, *United States Army in World War II: The Army Ground Forces* 365.

<sup>80</sup> Field Manual 100-15, *Field Service Regulations*, 56.

<sup>81</sup> Greenfield, Palmer and Wiley, *United States Army in World War II: The Army Ground Forces* 365.

<sup>82</sup> Matray, *Hodge Podge: American Occupation Policy in Korea, 1945-1948*.

In summary, the army conceived of the corps as a tactical organization. Doctrine, leadership capacity and structure were all demonstrably tactical. Even McNair's institutional refinements of the corps structure over the course of World War II only further reinforced the tactical orientation. Furthermore, the system promoted commanders that were well suited to leading these fighting organizations. The corps' abbreviated planning schedule only exacerbated the shortcoming of the corps and precluded their ability to mitigate their knowledge and planning gaps. Hodge and the XXIV Corps proved they excelled at the tactical tasks, having galvanized these skills in much more hostile environments prior. From the amphibious assault to the capture of key population centers and infrastructure, the Blacklist invasion was similar in scope and execution to Iceberg except for one surprising component. There was virtually no resistance to the invasion by the Japanese. In fact, the Japanese welcomed the American forces, eager to handover the powder keg. It was not the intensity or danger associated with the mission that frustrated the occupation force, it was the opposite. The expectations of an operational command required a capability in the staff and executors that planned well forward, interpreted strategic guidance, and reconciled external pressures. In short, the mission entailed a level of interactive complexity that demanded capabilities for long term planning and deep understanding. These expectations proved incongruent with the capabilities of the XXIV Corps in Blacklist beyond the initial invasion and securing of the Japanese surrender.

### Section Three: Forging an Operational Corps

Upon arrival, Hodge confronted the Soviet 25th Army to his direct north, over a quarter of a million potentially hostile Japanese troops throughout the American occupation zone and an increasingly disaffected and divided native population. No tactical solution would suffice to manage these actors. It is hardly a surprise that Korean War expert and veteran Donald Boose describes the American occupation in Korea as a “portentous sideshow.”<sup>83</sup> When Hodge and the initial elements of the 7th Infantry Division reached the Korean shores on that first week of September, the tactical elements quickly went to task while the gaping inadequacy in their ability to execute the operational aspects of the mission hamstrung the staff. Despite the indication in the Blacklist order that the second mission, the establishment of the military government, followed security operations, the reality was that security and governance operations needed to occur simultaneously.

Despite all the shortcomings that made the corps incongruent with the ambitious mission, Hodge and the XXIV corps were still responsible for completing all three aspects of the mission assigned. Due to both the corps proficiency but also to the minimal Japanese resistance, the tactical occupation went without a major setback as described previously. This left the last two portions of the mission that Hodge described. He must “maintain order, establish an effective government along democratic lines to replace the Japanese government in Korea, and rebuild a sound economy as a basis for Korean independence.”<sup>84</sup> Additionally, the third portion, he must “train Koreans in handling their own affairs and prepare Korea to govern itself as a free and independent nations.” Regardless of the unit, these lofty tasks required years of dedicated experts

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<sup>83</sup> Donald Boose, Jr., “Portentous Sideshow: The Korean Occupation Decision,” *Parameters* (Winter 1995) accessed January 15, 2016, <http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/1995/boose.htm>.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

working tirelessly with plentiful resources and a stable security environment. Hodge had none of these. Rather, he contended with an obstructive Soviet 25th Army to the north, a restive and divided Korean population all around, and a complete lack of expertise from within. The first two sections established how the Americans saw Korea and then how they saw themselves. This section examines how Hodge used his resources available to forge an operational command by way of a military government while contending with the two primary challenges, the Korean political aspirants and the Soviet 25th Army.

Though doctrine, training and higher-level policy were important and deficient, the many shortcomings of the Korean occupation manifested through the decisions of the commander and his interaction with his environment. A mono-causal reasoning for the shortcoming during the occupation belies the emerging interactive and structural complexity of the theater that laid the groundwork for the next eventual conflagration. As Clausewitz cautions, conflict is not a series of mathematical factors; rather, it is most like a game of cards. “From the very start there is an interplay of possibilities, probabilities, good luck and bad that weaves its way throughout the length and breadth of the tapestry.”<sup>85</sup> In occupation era Korea, Hodge’s ability to manage the resources available to him against the primary challenges to stability formed this interplay. The XXIV Corps proved incapable of handling the possibilities and probabilities of a theater filled with political and military challenges throughout. Their lack of leadership and staff capacity exacerbated an increasingly tense relationship with the Soviets, fostered conditions for further Korean political disunity and, ultimately, increased the likelihood of a civil war in Korea.

As the XXIV Corps organically lacked any resident capacity to handle the complexity of operating a government, civil affairs specialists provided the specialized skills necessary to guide the occupied nation. During and after the battles across North Africa and Europe, General Dwight

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<sup>85</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976/1984), 86, Kindle.

Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander Europe and MacArthur's peer, recognized early that the required expertise to execute these sensitive missions was not resident in the combat formations. These missions required significant augmentation from personnel trained in the unique demands of military government.<sup>86</sup> In response to the anticipated need, the Virginia School of Government opened its doors by decree of Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson in May of 1942 and provided the majority of these specially trained personnel. This program rapidly expanded to a number of other prestigious universities such as Harvard, Princeton and several public universities.<sup>87</sup> The central school at Charlottesville, Virginia, instructed up to 100 officers at a time in military organizations and method, the social institutions of foreign countries, and the functioning of military government. Admission committees selected candidates based on previous experience in the civilian sector but were not always of necessarily the highest caliber of individual.<sup>88</sup> Despite the concerted effort of the school to assist in the overall post World War II occupation, it did little to alleviate any of Hodge's problems in Korea. Most consequentially for Hodge, policy prohibited the school policy from even instructing on Korea in order to focus on the priority occupation areas of German speaking areas of Europe and Japan.<sup>89</sup>

While the United States committed to the occupation of Korea in 1943, it took no measures to prepare specifically for the occupation. In contrast, the civil administration programs "in the last four months of 1943, turned out more than 2,000 graduates, thereby nearly filling the estimated European wartime requirements." In four months alone, the schools trained over 2,000

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<sup>86</sup> Rebecca Damm Patterson, *The US Army and Nation-Building: Explaining Divergence in Effective Military Innovation* (PhD. diss., George Washington University, 2009), accessed October 12, 2015, <http://pqdtopen.proquest.com/doc/304880440.html?FMT=ABS>, 41.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>88</sup> Earl F. Ziemke, *The U.S. Army in the Occupation of Germany: 1944-1946* (Army Historical Series), Center of Military History (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1990), 14.

<sup>89</sup> Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire*, Loc. 5849, Kindle.

specialists but, despite this, not a single graduate spoke Korean or understood the culture and politics in September of 1945!<sup>90</sup> Despite their best intentions, the dearth of language capabilities and understanding of the peninsula crippled the arriving civil affairs personnel. Thus, Hodge depended on the few former Korean missionaries culled from within his command and the few English speaking Koreans he deemed trustworthy.<sup>91</sup>

Hodge executed the first seven weeks of occupation without a functioning civil affairs structure because of the contracted planning timeline and the competing higher security priorities. On October 21, 1945, the first civil affairs contingent arrived consisting of eight officers and eighteen enlisted men with a major as the senior officer.<sup>92</sup> According to a historian of the American military government in Korea, E. Grant Meade, the officers received no specific training on Korea and were even unaware of their destination when they embarked on the ships towards Inchon. Upon arrival, they received the Cairo declaration, MacArthur's decrees, and the "dozen or more ordinances, general orders, and notices thus far printed by Military Government."<sup>93</sup> The limited documentation they received was of little use to implement the civil administration, since neither the military command nor the military government could brief this team on the attitudes of the Korean people.<sup>94</sup> The intimate familiarity of the civil affairs officers with Japanese culture was nearly as damaging as their ignorance of the Korean culture itself. Many future Korean constabularies gained their experience in the Japanese occupation forces as

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<sup>90</sup> Patterson, *The US Army and Nation-Building*, 9.

<sup>91</sup> Millet, *The War for Korea, 1945-1950*, Loc. 2847, Kindle.

<sup>92</sup> E. Grant Meade, *American Military Government in Korea* (New York, NY: Columbia University, 1951), 66.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*



troops. When these constabulary troops clung to Japanese methods that conflicted with traditional Korean values, the Americans were woefully inept to recognize the friction.<sup>95</sup>

For those first seven weeks without a civil affairs structure, lacking language capability, and without credible government structures in Korea to subsume the deficiencies left by the Japanese upon removal, Hodge again turned to Japan for a source of guidance on how to setup the military government. In Japan, MacArthur with the concurrence of the president determined that the Japanese government structure should remain largely in place thereby not necessitating a military government be created.<sup>96</sup> The precedent set by MacArthur had two implications for Hodge. First, a portion of MacArthur's civil affairs elements transferred to the XXIV Corps to assist in the occupation of Korea though the majority remained with the 6th and 8th Armies in Japan.<sup>97</sup> Second, and more critically, Hodge modeled the initial Korean administrative structure after MacArthur's guidance to maintain the existing structure as much as possible. This specific guidance intended for Japan was incompatible with the Korean's views of themselves as not a conquered but a liberated people.

Hodge modeled his command on a hybrid of MacArthur's construct in Japan and that described in FM 27-5 to mold his command into a three-tiered structure. The first tier consisted of a tactical level centered on the divisions in regional responsibilities. These divisions were primarily responsible for security but also took on governmental responsibility roles prior to the arrival of civil affairs soldiers or in lieu of them, if they were lacking. Bruce Cumings notes disparagingly that in "August 1945 American planners in Washington thought of military

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<sup>95</sup> Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945-1950*, Loc. 2049-2061, Kindle.

<sup>96</sup> Douglas MacArthur and his General Staff, *Center of Military History 13-4: MacArthur in Japan: The Occupation: Military Phase* (Volume 1 Supplement) (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1966), 66-79.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

occupation as an extension of political policy and infantry troops as the agents of policy implementation.”<sup>98</sup> “That such infantry forces might be ill-prepared and uncomprehending was of little import. In fact, it was a given in the situation. The point was just to get them there.”<sup>99</sup> Since Hodge had little guidance and was reliant on his inadequate experience, he used his combat troops in the capacity that supported the main objective listed in Field Manual 27-10, *The Law of Land Warfare*. This was one of two doctrinal references at the time for how to conduct occupation operations. Later sections describe the other instructive source, Field Manual 27-5, *The United States Army and Navy Manual of Military Government and Civil Affairs*. *The Law of Land Warfare* declares, “The principal objective of the occupant is to provide for the security of the invading army and to contribute its support and efficiency and the success of its operations. In restoring public order and safety he will continue in force the ordinary civil and criminal laws of the occupied territory which do not conflict with this object.”<sup>100</sup>

The divisions used impromptu and ineffective plans within the regions that often created more friction than help largely due to their lack of training and guidance. Lacking interpreters or directed guidance, the divisions were inadequate at best to perform duties beyond basic security tasks. In fact, they often created even a more divisive environment by their practices. For example, the Fortieth Infantry Division security patrols used the Japanese police forces still in the province in order to secure some districts. The image of the American occupation troops not only working with the Japanese but also collaborating with them to suppress perceived Korean violations added to the growing fervor in the district and perception that the Americans were occupiers, not liberators. This image built on the existing image Hodge’s landing party created

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<sup>98</sup> Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 124.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> FM 27-10, *Law of Land Warfare*, 76.

when they disregarded Korean leaders in order meet first with the Japanese occupiers shortly after departing the landing craft.<sup>101</sup>

The second tier of government established by Hodge was the civil affairs hierarchy, which comprised the backbone of the American Military Government. The professionals trained at the Virginia School of Government and its franchises along with staff members released to the corps from MacArthur's staff and elsewhere filled these ranks. Primarily trained in Japanese language, culture and politics, a representative civil affairs officer noted, "had I gone to Japan I would have been moderately well equipped for a beginner, but as far as Korea was concerned I knew absolutely nothing."<sup>102</sup> Regardless of their ill preparation, the civil affairs officers setup a parallel command structure to that of the tactical command. Some of the tactical commanders retained dual responsibilities such as the commander of the 7th Infantry Division, Major General Archibald Arnold, who became responsible for the day-to-day operations of the military government.<sup>103</sup> These touch points back to the tactical formation were critical in order to retain command and control by Hodge. Field Manual 27-5 gives the structure of the military government in a territorial organization such as the one employed in Korea. It states, "local civil affairs officers are not responsible to operational unit commanders stated in the area with regard to the administration of civil affairs, but report directly to higher civil affairs officers."<sup>104</sup> The purpose of this structure is purportedly to unburden the operational commanders since they are "apt to overlook the importance of civil affairs duty to operations, as well as to diplomatic and economic objectives."<sup>105</sup> In total, Korea received nearly 2,000 officers to staff the military

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<sup>101</sup> Meade, *American Military Government in Korea*, 62.

<sup>102</sup> Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire*, Loc. 2823, Kindle.

<sup>103</sup> Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945-1950*, Loc. 1571, Kindle.

<sup>104</sup> FM 27-10, *Law of Land Warfare*, 25.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

government, owing largely to the large reallocation from MacArthur's Japan occupation staff.<sup>106</sup>

This is over three times the amount initially estimated during planning. Hodge's ability to integrate these two parallel tactical and governmental efforts into a single unified effort was paramount to his potential for success in his new role as the military governor.

The third tier of the military government was the State Department channel included Hodge's principle political advisor, H. Merrell Benninghoff. The State Department officially assigned Benninghoff as Hodge's political advisor but his ties to the state department and to MacArthur's command enabled a degree of freedom beyond solely advising Hodge. Upon notification of the mission to Korea, Hodge understood the limitations of his corps and requested a political advisor to help guide him.<sup>107</sup> The state department appropriately assigned Benninghoff as Hodge's primary political advisor because of his involvement in discussions on the future of Korea since 1943.<sup>108</sup> Benninghoff came with a small staff that enabled the State Department to have a communication and reporting channel back to Washington. Though Benninghoff's actual staff was small, his influence was significant. Between September and December of 1945, he authored or co-authored thirty-six foreign relations cables to Washington. An example of these transmittals, within a week of arrival, Benninghoff warned the State Department in Washington of the unstable situation on the Korean peninsula, writing that, "southern Korea can be described as a powder keg ready to explode at the application of a spark."<sup>109</sup> MacArthur directly used Benninghoff's language when on September 18, 1945 while writing to the US War Department, the Supreme Commander warned of the numerous challenges and shortcoming of the XXIV

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<sup>106</sup> Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 128.

<sup>107</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration and the Cold War* (Stanford University Press, 1992), 89.

<sup>108</sup> Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 129.

<sup>109</sup> Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, 89.

Corps in fulfilling its role on the peninsula.<sup>110</sup> Despite Benninghoff's relative influence beyond the command, the literature reviewed points to an amicable and functional relationship between the commander and his senior political advisor.

General Hodge armed himself with the tools available in a resource and information constrained environment in order to transform his tactical command into a command capable of fulfilling its operational responsibilities as an occupation force in Korea. He requested resources in the form of personnel and information; he reorganized his staff; and assigned his tactical elements to duties that they were most proficient to perform. Regardless of his efforts, within two weeks of arriving on the Korean peninsula he was already aware of the "powder keg ready to explode." The decision to allow the Soviets to occupy the northern half of the peninsula and the assignment of an insufficient tactical formation to fill this immense role in place of the more qualified Tenth Army had echoing effects until the spark finally ignited the explosion several years later at the outset of the Korean War.

Hodge's ability to reinstate some form of Korean government was critical to the potential success of the occupation and riddled with trouble because of Hodge's personal inability to confront the challenges. In November, the Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy wrote to Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson that he shared Acheson's concerns with Hodge's methods and decisions for creating the political structure but that they should give him time and leeway to figure out this "impossible situation."<sup>111</sup> An article relayed by Secretary of State Byrnes further

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<sup>110</sup> Douglas MacArthur, "Commander in Chief Army Forces Advance (General Douglas MacArthur) Tokyo Japan to War Department (General George Marshall), "Powder Keg Memo" 18 September 1945.

<sup>111</sup> "The Assistant Secretary of War (McCloy) to the Under Secretary of State (Acheson)," *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers*, 1945, The British Commonwealth, The Far East, Volume VI (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969), Document 815.

expounds that Hodge “envisaged his own position as being merely that of a coordinator and adviser,” therefore he made the poor decision to keep the current colonial government structure in Korea along with a large number of key Japanese bureaucrats in their current positions.<sup>112</sup> It is difficult to overstate the negative effects that this decision had on the XXIV Corps ability to execute its mission in the first few months. Upon review, it is difficult to see Hodge’s alternative. The few civil affairs staff available to him could speak Japanese and were familiar with the Japanese government system, which they learned at the Virginia School of Government. There was virtually no technical expertise in the Korean population to fulfill these roles due to the years of Japanese monopolization of the professional positions in the industrial sectors and government bureaucracy. Further, the State-War-Naval Coordinating Committee’s Basic Directives memo provided to MacArthur in October of 1945, specifically authorized, if not encouraged, maintaining Japanese personnel in key positions.<sup>113</sup> The contradiction Hodge needed to remedy was that the Koreans were elated they could progress as a society without the oppression of the Japanese but they simultaneously could not progress without the expertise resident in the Japanese. The 35 years of occupations created a dependency on the occupiers despite Koreans insistence on immediate independence.<sup>114</sup>

Hodge’s command created an adversarial relationship almost immediately with the aspiring local politicians. He immediately dismantled the Korean People’s Republic created in the

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<sup>112</sup> “The Secretary of State (Byrnes) to the Acting Political Adviser in Japan (Atcheson),” *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers*, 1945, The British Commonwealth, The Far East, Volume VI. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), Document 816.

<sup>113</sup> SWNCC 176/8, “Basic Initial Directive to the Commander in Chief, U.S. Army Forces, Pacific, for the Administration of Civil Affairs in Those Areas of Korea Occupied by U.S. Forces,” State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (Washington: Undated); *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers*, 1945, The British Commonwealth, The Far East, Volume VI (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1969).

<sup>114</sup> Byrnes, “The Secretary of State to the Acting Political Adviser in Japan (Atcheson), November 16, 1945”

last days of Japanese occupation and renounced any local aspirations for immediate independence the Korean people may have. During the first several weeks, disparate political parties achieved little coalescence in political opinion save three issues to which they were all agreed. First, they all opposed trusteeship. Second, they all revoked any inclination of the Americans to keep the Japanese in any role of authority. Finally, they all concurred that Korea should become immediately independent and united.<sup>115</sup> Rhee, acting to unify disparate parties, brought together the communists, the Korean Democratic Party and others under the Central Council for the Rapid Realization of Korean Independence with these points of agreement as unifying themes.<sup>116</sup> Hodge, acting on his interpretation of the declared intent of his government, counteracted each point of Korean political consensus.

Over the next several months, the rival political parties battled for influence amongst the people outside of a sanctioned political system. A crucial vulnerability to the XXIV Corps lack of civil administration capability and knowledge of Korean politics was evident in the political arena. Instead of attempting to create a functional, legitimate government system that may set the conditions to unify the country, Hodge made decisions that further polarized the parties. Lacking any Korean language speakers, Hodge relied on a fluent lieutenant commander and son of former missionaries to Korea, George Z. Williams, to choose the members of the advisory council.<sup>117</sup> Hence, Hodge favored and attempted to coopt the rich contacts of Williams that were almost all right wing elements under future president, Syngman Rhee. This right wing, capitalist faction was unrepresentative of most people's opinion. The commander related to Rhee and his cohorts

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<sup>115</sup> H.M. Benninghoff, "The Political Adviser in Korea (Benninghof) to the Secretary of State(Byrnes) *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers*, 1945, The British Commonwealth, The Far East, Volume VI (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1969).

<sup>116</sup> Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 222.

<sup>117</sup> Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire*, Loc. 2858, Kindle.

that were mostly western educated, English speaking, well to do, capitalists. Eventually, Hodge manufactured a Korean advisory council to advise the American Military Government. Leftists, communists, and others refused to participate or quit upon nomination due to the overwhelming perception of bias in the forum. Only one representative outside of Rhee's party and he quit in protest, only to be replaced by another Rhee supporter. The population further rejected the legitimacy of these leaders since the majority of them either left the country during the occupation or were in support of the Japanese occupiers.<sup>118</sup>

Discarding any Korean governmental entities, Hodge fully empowered the three-tiered military government described previously to implement direct rule over the Korean populace in the American zone.<sup>119</sup> This proved incredibly unpopular. Riots and demonstrations broke out, often led by the leaders of the disbanded government.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, a general lack of staff capacity to handle political relations hampered the ability of the military government to effectively rule. Some of this ineffectiveness is attributable to the Tenth Army Anti-Aircraft Artillery Command, originally assigned to Tenth Army, which was responsible for executing the daily administrative duties critical to a functioning military government. However, this unit contained no military governance personnel and none became available to them until well after the landings at Inchon.<sup>121</sup> Since none of the occupation force civil affairs assets spoke Korean, the language of occupation was initially the same as it was for the previous thirty-five years, Japanese. It later officially transferred to English though daily transactions necessarily remained largely in Japanese.

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<sup>118</sup> Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire*, Loc. 2859-2865, Kindle.

<sup>119</sup> Oh, *Korea Under the American Military Government*, 4.

<sup>120</sup> Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire*, Loc. 2947, Kindle.

<sup>121</sup> Boose, Jr., "Portentous Sideshow.



In order to ameliorate the lack of technical skills available in the American and Korean forces, Hodge and his forces collaborated with the Japanese. Prior to the invasion, the advanced party began discussing the future of Korea with the Japanese, shunning any direct Korean involvement. This was again in defiance of the few points all Korean political parties agreed – immediate removal of all Japanese authority. Perhaps unknowingly, Hodge and his staff appeared to ingratiate themselves to the Japanese forces by holding a series of meeting with the Japanese occupiers to discuss administration of the Korean people, aspects of the industrial and economic capacity in south Korea and the security situation after the invasion. The Korean populace may have overlooked a single event but Hodge opted to maintain the Japanese colonial government structure. Furthermore, for the first several weeks until the protests against continued Japanese influence became unbearable, he kept Japanese officials in key billets to manage the technical aspects of Korean industry and government.<sup>122</sup>

President Truman recognized the Korean population's backlash and announced in response on September 12 that all Japanese would leave office immediately. He deferred blame to the ground commander in Korea, saying it was a "practical matter" and "theater decision."<sup>123</sup> Despite this pronouncement, Hodge received continued approval to use Japanese professionals, though in a more supervised role, through the Basic Directive memo from the State Department in October. This contradictory and agitating guidance stated, "all persons, regardless of nationality, who have planned an active and dominant governmental, economic, finance or other significant part in the formulation or execution of Japan's program of aggression... will be interned pending further disposition."<sup>124</sup> The memo from the State-War-Navy Coordinating

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<sup>122</sup> Meade, *American Military Government in Korea*, 75-89.

<sup>123</sup> Harry S. Truman, "The President's News Conference," September 12, 1945, accessed January 12, 2016, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=12356>.

<sup>124</sup> State –War-Navy Coordinating Committee 176/8, "Basic Initial Directive to the Commander in Chief, U.S. Army Forces, Pacific."

Committee granted exception to “closely supervised services of the Japanese arrested or interned as above who are absolutely required.”<sup>125</sup> Hodge interpreted this guidance apparently loosely as he kept Japanese bureaucrats in position until the protests became overwhelming. This contrary guidance built upon the gathering image of the US forces as occupiers, not liberators. Hodge did not have the political savvy, staff capacity to mitigate these decisions. Rather, he enflamed them with political decisions.

Hodge’s acceptance of the right wing Korean advisory council and alienation of any left or communist voices carried over into the Soviet sector of Korea. On December 17, 1945, only one day after deliberations in Moscow between the United States and the Soviet Union on the future of Korea, Syngman Rhee created an even more inflammatory environment. “He alleged that the Soviet Union wished to make a slave of Korea and Koreans; that Korean communists called Russia their mother land and wished to make Korea a part of the Soviet Union; and that the communists, Soviet and Korean, wanted to divide Korea.”<sup>126</sup> Ironically, he declared that a failure to unite against the communists ensured a future civil war. In fact, his controversial statement was an opening salvo encouraging civil war by calcifying the opposing camps.<sup>127</sup> The lack of clear United States policy of the future of Korea and Hodge and his staff’s lack of understanding on either Korean affairs or political affairs in general certainly contributed to the increased political disarray.

In reaction to the complexities and lack of understanding of the United States’ true aims in Korea, Hodge turned his attention to the familiar. Hodge identified a tangible threat,

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<sup>125</sup> State –War-Navy Coordinating Committee 176/8, “Basic Initial Directive to the Commander in Chief, U.S. Army Forces, Pacific.”

<sup>126</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 222.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

communist ideology, and began systematically to extract its influence from the Korean peninsula through his negotiations with the Koreans and the Soviets. This anti-communist bent shaped Hodge's command and that of his subordinates in their actions turning their actions for occupation and the creation of an independent nation towards active policies to counter a burgeoning enemy. This bent explains the consistent adversarial tone of his correspondence and his preference for right wing Korean leadership that could counteract Soviet influence.

Massing in July on the Manchurian border, a full month before the XXIV Corps prepared to deploy, the Soviets invaded Korea with the Soviet 25th Army. They rapidly occupied the northern portion of the Korean peninsula by August 12, 1945, temporarily reaching areas south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. The occupation was in line with their overall objectives of a continued influential presence in neighboring areas of strategic influence such as Manchuria and Korea that fell under Japanese influence at the end of the 1905 Russo-Japanese War.<sup>128</sup> The United States originally invited the Soviets into Far East Asia as part of a design to assist in causing the collapse of the Japanese control over the various regions.<sup>129</sup> Truman and Marshall no longer believed the Soviet presence was required by early 1945 after the successful test of the atomic bomb, but it was already too late.<sup>130</sup> The sheer size of the Soviet force in China precluded any efforts to retract those agreements. It seemed the Soviets would capture their objectives regardless and, if

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<sup>128</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *We Know Now: Rethinking the Korean War* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, U.K., 1997), 3.

<sup>129</sup> J.H. Burns, "The Executive of the President's Soviet Protocol Committee to the President's Special Assistant. Subject: Russia. Memorandum for Mr. Hopkins, August 10, 1943," accessed November 17, 2015, <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/the-executive-of-the-presidents-soviet-protocol-committee-to-the-presidents-special-assistant/>

<sup>130</sup> Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries, Monday, 23 July 1945, LI, 34-35 (microfilm edition, reel 9), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale Univ. Library, New Haven, CT, accessed February 12, 2016, <http://images.library.yale.edu/madid/showThumb.aspx?qs=16&qm=15&q1=0465&qcl=contains&qf1=subject1>.

necessary, through force.<sup>131</sup> The Koreans in the north initially welcomed the 25th Soviet Army under General Chistiakov. Quickly dispelling any thoughts of liberation though, the Soviet killed between fifty and eighty thousand Japanese and Koreans while capturing 2.7 million more soldiers and civilians. Four hundred thousand of those were captured Japanese and Korean prisoners of war sent to Siberian labor camps. Of these, only ninety five thousand ever returned.<sup>132</sup>

Hodge's intense focus on the Soviet attempts to undermine the American occupation and influence the south was constant and often justified. Some characterize him as being almost obsessive over the potential communist influences from the north.<sup>133</sup> Substantiating Hodge's paranoia, the Soviets rapidly revamped the political and economic structures in the north towards "peoples committees" that "promoted radical political-economic reform."<sup>134</sup> Moreover, they installed a radical guerilla fighter in Kim Il Sung in the north and officially recognized the Korean Communist Party in the south.<sup>135</sup> The promotion of Soviet values in conjunction with the violence and pilfering the Soviet Army imposed on prisoners and Korean citizens alike led to a mass exodus of Koreans fleeing the north to the south. This further strained the fragile South Korean economy. Despite the indicators, neither the Soviets nor the Americans developed a clear policy toward the other during the fall of 1945, which stalled negotiation efforts between the commanders in the respective military occupation zones.

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<sup>131</sup> Boose, Jr. "Portentous Sideshow.

<sup>132</sup> Millett, *The War for Korea: 1945-1950*, Loc.1365, Kindle.

<sup>133</sup> Oh, *Korea Under the American Military Government*, 4-5.

<sup>134</sup> Offner, *Another Such Victory*, 350.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 351.

It was not until three months after the invasion in December of 1945 that the Moscow conference sought to formalize the relationship between the Soviets and the Americans and resolve the future of Korea through a Joint Commission. The four powers that originally formed the Korean trusteeship intended the Joint Commission to be a political forum for “the consideration of urgent problems affecting both southern and northern Korea and for the elaboration of measures establishing permanent coordination in administrative-economic matters” between the commands.<sup>136</sup> It was an effort to reconcile the communications deficiencies that existed between the Soviet and American Military elements. Washington previously authorized Hodge to conduct necessary communications with the Soviets but the political leaders did not authorize the 25th Army to reciprocate.<sup>137</sup> Neither side’s national policy gave them clear guidance to operate within, leaving major political decisions to the military commanders. The political channels recognized the strained relationship between the commands as early as September and the growing permanence of the thirty-eighth parallel as a border but still fruitlessly deliberated.<sup>138</sup> This led to frequent frustrations between the military commands such as when shortly after the XXIV Corps arrival in September, the Soviets cut off all power to the south of Korea without warning, a pattern they continued through the occupation. Hodge had no recourse but to suffer the

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<sup>136</sup> Moscow Meeting of Council of Foreign Ministers, 1945. 60 Stat. 1899; Treaties and Other International Acts Series 1555, signed at Moscow December 27, 1945, accessed November 12, 2015, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/m-ust000003-1341.pdf>, 1346-1347.

<sup>137</sup> James F. Byrnes, “The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman)” November 3, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers*, 1945, The British Commonwealth, The Far East, Volume VI (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969).

<sup>138</sup> “The Political Adviser in Korea (Benninghoff) to the Secretary of State,” September 26, 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers*, 1945, The British Commonwealth, The Far East, Volume VI. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969).

Soviet slight since they controlled over 80% of the Korean power production and were unresponsive to discussion requests.<sup>139</sup>

Despite good intentions, the Joint Commission proved a failure. At the first meeting of the Joint Commission in January 1946, the Soviets rejected proposals by the Americans to create free movement for goods and people across the 38th parallel.<sup>140</sup> The administrative divide continued to solidify into a de facto national boundary in light of the growing separation. It is convenient to blame the Soviets for a lack of cooperation but by the time the Joint Commission first met, both sides already anchored themselves in polarizing political decisions that left little room for compromise. In effect, Hodge's inexperience and his inadequate staff cemented the separation between the two powers as much as the Soviet implementation of any perceived communistic expansionism to the north. In the face of increasingly divisive behavior in Korea, Roosevelt's conception of a unifying diplomatic medium in the form of trusteeship for the Soviet Union and the United States was collapsing and even backfiring. No future attempts at the Joint Commission proved more successful and the Soviet-American relationships continued to wither. Hodge's dealings with the Korean political entities always intertwined with his negotiations with the Soviets. The military commands on both sides of the 38th parallel saw the other as provoking divide and polarizing the Korean political bodies towards their interests.

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<sup>139</sup> Allan R. Millett, *The War for Korea: 1945-1950*, Loc. 3400-3550, Kindle.

<sup>140</sup> John M. Change, Edward A. Ackerman, Niles Bond, and Arthur C. Bunce, Jr., "The War in Korea: Background of Korea," *The Age of Danger: Major Speeches on American Problems*, Ed. Harold F. Harding (New York, NY: Random House, 1952), 111-113.

## Conclusion

“The general mission of the United States occupation forces wherever they are stationed is to insure that we “win the peace.” This includes “the establishment and maintenance of law and order in those parts of the world most upset by war. It includes re-establishment of orderly government in many lands where war has left its great destruction. It includes enforcing of the terms of surrender in conquered and recalcitrant nations such as Japan and Germany, as well as enforcing the actual surrender of enemy troops wherever they may be. It includes the re-establishment of several small nations under their own rule along democratic principles, thus removing the yoke of tyranny and despotism from the less fortunate people of the world. One outstanding example of these small nations, long under the Japanese rule, oppression, and exploitation, is Korea, where we are now stationed.”<sup>141</sup>

-- Lieut. Gen. John R. Hodge, April 1948

Hodge’s experiences between 1945 and 1948 finally gave him the understanding he needed when he first landed at Inchon and viewed the staggering complexity of the situation facing him but that was three years too late to effectively manage the occupation. Hodge was personally unprepared, armed with insufficient resources and facing a complex situation beyond his capabilities. If Hodge had published his memoirs, he may note the deficiencies of the American occupation manifested in the three distinct but interrelated areas examined in this paper. These were the type and purpose of the unit and its commander, the preparation and guidance available to conduct the American occupation of Korea, and finally, the unfolding interplay of the unit and their complex operational environment in the last half of 1945. The cumulative effect of these elements created a quagmire in just a few months that Hodge could not extract himself over the three years of occupation.

The army selected the commander, wrote doctrine and designed the unit for operations at the tactical level, which are distinctly different from the requirements at the operational level. As a lieutenant colonel only four short years prior to arrival, Hodge could not fathom the responsibility the United States entrusted to him in Korea. He was now the overseer of a former

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<sup>141</sup> Hodge, Introduction to Headquarters, XXIV Corps.

Japanese colony lacking a government, fostering a shattered economy, and divided in half by ideologically opposed and increasingly confrontational powers. His education and experience prior to the occupation prepared him to command and control tactical actions over large areas. He was confident and proven in leading multiple divisions consisting of tens of thousands of soldiers in hostile environments and completing the mission successfully. These are the skills he learned formally at the Command and General Staff College, in training and refined as a commander in operations at Bougainville, Leyte and leading the XXIV Corps previously in Iceberg. This experience enabled Hodge to successfully “take the Japanese surrender, disarm the Japanese armed forces, enforce the terms of the surrender, and remove Japanese imperialism from Korea,” as the first mission in Blacklist demanded.<sup>142</sup>

He did these previous operations under the guidance of an operational headquarters that had a large and experienced staff of capable generalists and specialists trained in long term planning and operating in the gray zone between strategic guidance and tactical actions. Hodge left his previous operational commander, Stilwell, shortly before arriving at the Korean peninsula, which means he likely had a significant amount of guidance, and planning from Stilwell’s headquarters. After Hodge arrived at Korea and confronted the complex operational environment, he became responsible for translating the strategic guidance personally into tactical actions. He found that his staff was inadequate because of inexperience, lack of guiding doctrine and the complete ignorance of Korean culture or government. This, of course, was not the staff’s fault as the United States deliberately chose to allocate its resources to the high priority efforts of Japan and Europe, leaving the Korean occupation force without a channel to receive the critical cultural, language or understanding of government they needed to succeed.

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<sup>142</sup> John R. Hodge, “Introduction to Headquarters, XXIV Corps, Troop Information and Education Section,” in *Korea*, (Troop and Information Section, General Headquarters, Far East Command: 1948).



The compounding factors of poor preparation, an inadequate staff, and unclear guidance combined with the emerging Korean political situation and the growing Soviet threat to limit Hodge's ability to extract the occupation from its seemingly doomed course. Cohen and Gooch, who offered the formula for mapping a military misfortune discussed earlier, write that the temptation to blame a single "man in the dock," usually the commander, is normally misplaced. Rather the "modern commander's work is far more complex" than previously. "His decisions are affected by the perceptions, demands, and requirements of others and his actions do little more than shape the tasks to be carried out by his many subordinates."<sup>143</sup> This is certainly true of Hodge's circumstance in Korea in regards to the Korean political situation and the Soviets. His options were limited and the situation was constantly evolving. That said, Hodge's refusal to work with the communists either to his north under General Christiakov or to those within south Korea virtually assured that a moderating, unifying political solution was not forthcoming. It is a self-reinforcing cycle where Hodge's decisions to isolate the Soviets and communists that further solidified the country's division and further polarized the sides, thereby making future compromise ever more difficult.

Hodge made the statement in the above epigraph to his troops just before handing over control of the American occupation to the United Nations in 1948. Evident in Hodge's statement to his troops, he viewed his expanded purpose as to "win the peace" by "re-establish(ing) Korea as an independent nation."<sup>144</sup> Hodge strived to achieve that end in accordance with the second mission in Blacklist, establishing a post-war government. He never successfully managed to transition his force from a tactical corps to an operational command and military government in order to "win the peace" and "establish Korea as an independent nation?"<sup>145</sup> The momentum of

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<sup>143</sup> Cohen and Gooch, *Military Misfortunes*, 6-7.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Hodge, Introduction to Headquarters, XXIV Corps.

the occupation proceeded towards an irreversible level of division and trouble by December of 1945 and never recovered.

Of course, it is interesting to ponder how differently Korea may be today if a few key decisions went differently. Had Roosevelt not invited the Soviets into Korea at Yalta would Japan have capitulated as quickly without the fear of a Soviet invasion looming? Could that compelling threat against Japan still exist without sacrificing Korea? Perhaps if Truman pushed back on Kai Shek, already in an increasingly weak domestic position, and insisted that Stilwell, his most capable military commander lead the occupation in Korea, the Korean people would have compromised on the economic and political restructuring needed after the Japanese occupation and marched forward towards a unified and independent Korea. Still seventy years later, continued tension can largely be traced to establishing an, “arbitrary, poorly drawn” boundary by well-intentioned but naive planners.<sup>146</sup> If Rusk placed it elsewhere, would the Russians protest? It is a fascinating but ultimately fruitless effort to try to divine the landscape of a destination down a road not taken. The lessons learned for the operational artist are rather those disconnects between the ends, ways and means that led to the military misfortune.

The lessons learned from this occupation are the compounding impacts of a separation between strategic and operational level decision-making. As early as 1943 in the Cairo declaration, the political ends were laid for post war Asia that espoused the aspirational goals of democracy, human rights, and other lofty ideals associated with liberal democracy. The military, understandably focused on the main war effort, only partially translated these ideals into systems to prepare and later to ‘win the peace.’ Military planners knew of the American military experiences in nation building prior to and during World War II as well as the length of time and resources required for it to work. Specifically, the need for competent military government with

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<sup>146</sup> Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustration*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2006), 56-58.

language and cultural skills sufficient to understand and then assist the Korean people become a free people 'in due course.' Despite this, the American occupation entered the Korean theater undermanned, with no resident expertise, and knowing that resources were far more likely to reduce than increase.

Next, President Truman withdrew his support for Stilwell with little over a month remaining to plan and execute the Blacklist mission. Civil military relations in the United States clearly subordinate the military to civilian authority as is necessary to preserve a thriving liberal democracy. As such, the military is obligated to follow the orders of the commander in chief no matter how rash or uninformed those orders may be. It is unclear if Marshall or MacArthur actively labored to keep Stilwell as the commander or if they sought an equivalent replacement, though with Stilwell's extensive experience in Asia that is unlikely to exist. What is clear is that the headquarters assigned to the Korean theater centered on a tactical formation, poorly equipped to run a theater, interact at the political level, or translate strategic guidance. As such, the possibilities for ameliorating actions with either the Soviets or the Korean leaders were unlikely to occur. Hodge simply did not have the experience or the staff that Stilwell did to interact with these critical players and within five months, it was already too late to remedy.

Some Cold War experts believe that war in Korea was inevitable. Perhaps the nature of the conflict may have changed if the Soviet Union, China or the United States chose a different strategy leading up to it but regardless, a war was bound to occur.<sup>147</sup> This paper highlighted how the specific actions at the political, operational and tactical level in both terms of preparation and execution increased the likelihood of the later conflagration by failing to create sufficient conditions to win the peace. Even after the failings of the American Occupation, the United States

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<sup>147</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *We Know Now: Rethinking the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 1997). 71.

involvement in the Korea War was not predestined. That was rather a separate deliberate decision made later to become involved in the conflict due to the perceptions of vital interests vis a vis the Soviet Union in 1950. Hodge holds only tangential responsibility for the United States entry into the Korean War despite his missteps. The United States failure to anticipate a complex environment and allocate sufficient resources largely deprived the American occupation forces the ability to secure and win the peace. Failing to anticipate the strategic fallout of the Soviet presence, the Korean political efforts, and as such failing to create a military strategy to confront those obstacles increased the likelihood of civil war. The choice later to enter the Korean conflict should only be conflated with Hodge's efforts in so much as the civil war and deterioration of Soviet-American relations rests partially on his shoulders.

In the current environment, the Department of State is responsible for “leading a whole-of-government approach to stabilization that includes the array of US Government departments and agencies, including DOD.”<sup>148</sup> “Within this broad approach, the primary military contribution to stabilization is to protect and defend the population, facilitating the personal security of the people and, thus, creating a platform for political, economic, and human security.”<sup>149</sup> The Joint Publication 3-07, *Stability Operations*, acknowledges that the Armed Forces may need to take a more direct role due to its capacity versus other agencies but “force is rarely the defining element that delivers success; instead, it is best used as an enabler of diplomacy.”<sup>150</sup> Korea provides a powerful illustration of the implications of diplomacy lagging behind military action and thereby, empowering tactical actors to shape the possible outcomes. It also shows the potential repercussions of

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<sup>148</sup> Joint Publication, JP 3-07, *Stability Operations* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), viii.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., I-2.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.,

diplomatic actors creating situations where the military cannot reasonably attain an acceptable solution because the problem is inherently political or the dedicated means simply cannot achieve the ends. Allan R. Millett, author of the comprehensive history of the Korean and American interactions from 1945 to 1950 begins his book with reference to a parable that is equally fitting in conclusion here. One should “not to put the burden of a donkey on the back of a grasshopper.”<sup>151</sup> In the same vein, one should not balance strategic success on the back of a tactical formation created to destroy the enemy.

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<sup>151</sup> Allan R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945-1950*, 49-50, Kindle.

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